

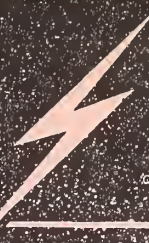
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homemakers' chat

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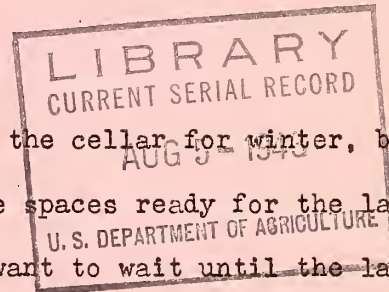
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Monday, August 2, 1943

Subject: "STOREROOM FOR ROOT VEGETABLES." Information from plant scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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It's too early yet to store vegetables in the cellar for winter, but it's not too early to get the cellar and other storage spaces ready for the late root crops when they do come in. Of course you will want to wait until the latest possible date,—just before a killing frost nips your garden,— and then bring in the root crops. But don't lose any good vegetables because you have no storage place fixed for them. You'll be wise to store all the garden food you can this wartime winter—and store it so it will keep well—so you'll lose none from spoilage.

Plant scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say that now is your chance to build a really good storeroom in the basement, if you don't already have one...or to improve the one you already have in various ways. For example, you may need more shelves...a slatted flooring to keep barrels and boxes off the ground...or better insulated walls...or more ventilation.

Families that have a cool, well-ventilated basement under the house may be in the habit of putting the vegetables down cellar without actually having a storeroom. But where there's a furnace in the cellar, the air is too warm and dry for root crops. In a cellar with a furnace, make a storeroom by partitioning off a corner or an "ell" of the basement, and then insulating the walls thoroughly, both inside walls and outside walls. You need to keep the furnace heat away from the vegetables, and keep outside freezing temperatures from them, too. The plant scientists recommend keeping most root vegetables as cold as possible without letting them freeze.

The natural place for a basement storeroom is in a corner with a window to open on mild days for ventilation. Two windows are even better. You need to change the air in the storeroom frequently to carry off odors, and to regulate the temperature and moisture. Darken these windows to keep light away from your vegetables and shade them in some way so that light doesn't come in even when they are open. Maybe you can have an electric light for seeing.

Now about the size of the storeroom. That depends somewhat on the amount of space you can spare in your cellar, and the shape of the part you partition off. A room 8 by 9 feet, or 10 by 12 is usually large enough.

If the cellar already has a concrete floor, of course the floor of the storage room will be part of it. But natural earth makes a better floor for a storage room than concrete or brick. It holds moisture better, and you can sprinkle it during very dry spells. Most root vegetables need moisture to keep well. Sweet potatoes and onions are the exception.

Now about bins or other containers. Permanent built-in bins are harder to clean than movable containers. So plan to have movable bins, or use barrels, crates or boxes. Instead of setting these containers directly on the floor, have a slat shelf made for them to stand on. Have it clear the ground by 4 to 6 inches so air will circulate freely about the vegetables. Have the slat floor in sections not too heavy to lift easily. That makes cleaning underneath and sprinkling the earth easy. The slat floor makes a good low shelf for stone crocks and pickle jars to stand on.

Then you'll probably want some regular shelves a foot or more wide along one side of the storeroom for small lots of vegetables, or possibly for some of your canned foods. Spread root vegetables out in several shallow containers on shelves rather than store too many in one deep box or barrel.

And now about storing certain vegetables. First, a word of warning about apples and potatoes. Don't keep apples in the same room with potatoes and other root crops. Apples absorb unpleasant flavors when stored with potatoes or other root vegetables. If you expect to have both apples and potatoes, either store

the fruit outdoors somewhere, and the root crops in the cellar, or vice versa. Or else partition your storeroom with a insulated wall that will keep odors and flavors from mixing.

Store celery upright in a box on the slatted floor, with plenty of soil adhering to its roots. It blanches itself while you store it, and doesn't dry out if the floor of the cellar is of earth and you keep it a little moist.

But don't store cabbage or turnips where you have celery, because celery absorbs the strong cabbage or turnip odor and flavor. For that matter, don't plan to store cabbage and turnips in the basement at all if you can possible store them outdoors. Their odor is likely to travel to other parts of the house unless the storeroom is well ventilated.

The storeroom is not the place for sweetpotatoes, squash and pumpkins, nor for onions. Sweetpotatoes, squash and pumpkins need a warmer, drier place than the root crops and white potatoes. You might clear a space near the furnace for these vegetables. Onions need a cool, dry, place, like a well-ventilated attic.

One last tip: After you have made all the changes you want in your storeroom, and before you start putting anything away in it, give it a good cleaning out and whitewash the walls and ceiling. This is particularly necessary for any storeroom that was used last season, to make sure there is no decayed material or dirt in corners or bins, and to freshen the room for this year's vegetables.

As perhaps you know, you are welcome to a free bulletin on storing vegetables at home. Order it now so you'll have it when your fall root vegetables are ready to store. The bulletin is called "Home Storage of Vegetables and Fruits." It is No. 1939. A postcard addressed to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. will bring it to you.

